

Amendments to the Claims

Claims 1-9 (Canceled)

10. (Currently amended) A carton comprising an open top container, a top closure connected to said open top container and at least one reinforced handle structure, said open top container and said top closure being formed from separate blanks respectively, wherein a first ply of said at least one reinforced handle structure is provided by said open top container, a second ply of said at least one reinforced handle structure is provided by said top closure, ~~and a~~ third ply of said at least one reinforced handle structure is provided by one of said top closure and said open top container, said first ply has a first handle aperture, said second ply has a second handle aperture, and said first and second handle apertures are disposed in substantial registry to provide a single hand opening.

11. (Previously presented) The carton according to claim 10 wherein said top closure comprises a hinged handle panel for providing said second ply, said handle panel is secured in flat face contact with an inner face of said first ply of said at least one reinforced handle structure.

12. (Previously presented) The carton according to claim 11 wherein said third ply of said at least one reinforced handle structure is secured in flat face contact with an outer face of said first ply.

13. (Previously presented) The carton according to claim 12 wherein said third ply of said at least one reinforced handle structure is hinged to said second ply of said at least one reinforced handle structure, and wherein a hinged connection between said second ply and said third ply provides a means for aligning said top closure with said open top container.

14. (Previously presented) The carton according to claim 10 wherein said first ply of

said at least one reinforced handle structure is disposed between, and in face contacting relationship with, said second and third plies.

15. (Previously presented) The carton according to claim 10, wherein said open top container comprises a plurality of walls, at least one of said walls of said open top container has a top flap hingedly connected thereto and folded downwardly into said open top container, wherein said top closure comprises an engaging tab for engaging said top flap such that said engaging tab is disposed in face contacting relationship with at least one of said at least one wall and said top flap to lock said top closure at a recessed position below a top of said open top container.

16. (Currently amended) A two-part blank for forming a carton, said blank comprising a first part for forming an open top container and a second part separate from said first part to form a top closure of said open top container, wherein said first and second part are provided with panels for forming at least one reinforced handle structure when the carton is erected, said at least one reinforced handle structure is of at least three ply construction, a first ply of said at least one reinforced handle structure is provided by said first part, a second ply of said at least one reinforced handle structure is provided by said second part, and a third ply of said at least one reinforced handle structure is provided by one of said first and second parts, said first ply has a first handle aperture, said second ply has a second handle aperture, and said first and second handle apertures, when the carton is erected, are disposed in substantial registry to provide a single hand opening.

17. (Previously presented) The blank according to claim 16 wherein said first part comprises a plurality of walls, said first ply of said at least one reinforced handle structure being provided by one of said walls of said first part.

18. (Previously presented) The blank according to either of claim 16 wherein said second part comprises at least one handle panel for providing said second ply of said at least one

reinforced handle structure.

19. (New) The carton according to claim 10 wherein said third ply has a cutout which is disposed in substantial registry with said first and second handle apertures to provide said hand opening.

20. (New) The carton according to claim 10 wherein said top closure comprises a main panel and a hinged handle panel for providing said second ply, said handle panel extending upward from said main panel such that said hand opening is positioned above said main panel.

21. (New) The carton according to claim 20 wherein said main panel is provided with a plurality of receiving apertures for receiving articles.

22. (New) The carton according to claim 21 wherein each of said receiving apertures is connected to at least another one of said receiving apertures by a frangible connection.

23. (New) The carton according to claim 22 further comprising a plurality of bottles received in said open top container, said bottles having neck portions that are received in said receiving openings respectively, said neck portions projecting outwardly of the carton through said receiving apertures and being disposed above said main panel.

24. (New) The carton according to claim 23 wherein said receiving apertures are sized such that each of said bottles cannot move out of the carton through a respective one of said receiving apertures without severing at least one of said frangible connections.

25. (New) The carton according to claim 20 wherein said open top container is of a tubular structure having a substantially octagonal cross section.

26. (New) The carton according to claim 25 further comprising a plurality of bottles received

in said open top container, said bottles being arranged in multiple rows to form a bottle arrangement, wherein said open top container has corner panels which are positioned adjacent to corners of said bottle arrangement respectively.

27. (New) The carton according to claim 26 wherein said top closure further comprises corner tabs hingedly attached to said main panel such that said top closure fits securely into said tubular structure of the substantially octagonal cross section.

28. (New) A package comprising a carton and a bottle group received in the carton, the bottle group being formed of a plurality of bottles arranged in multiple rows, each of the bottles having a bottle neck, the carton comprising an open top container in which the bottle group is placed and a top closure connected to said open top, the open top container and said top closure being formed from separate blanks respectively, wherein said top closure comprises a main panel and a hinged panel, the hinged panel being secured to the open top container such that the main panel is disposed at a recessed position below a top of the open top container, wherein the main panel is provided with a plurality of receiving apertures in which the bottle necks of said bottles are received such that the bottle necks project outwardly of the carton through the receiving apertures respectively, wherein each of the receiving apertures is connected to at least another one of the receiving apertures by a frangible connection, and wherein the receiving apertures are sized such that each of the bottles cannot move out of the carton through a respective one of the receiving apertures without severing at least one of said frangible connections.

29. (New) The package according to claim 28 wherein the carton further comprises at least one reinforced handle structure of a three-ply construction, wherein a first ply of the at least one reinforced handle structure is provided by the open top container, a second ply of the at least one reinforced handle structure is provided by the top closure, a third ply of the at least one reinforced handle structure is provided by one of the top closure and the open top container, the first ply has a first handle aperture, the second ply has a second handle aperture, and the first and second handle apertures are disposed in substantial registry to provide a single hand opening.